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## Book Review: More Ghost Towns of Texas

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*More Ghost Towns of Texas.* By T. Lindsay Baker. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. xi + 210 pp. Photographs, maps, bibliography, index. \$34.95.

According to T. Lindsay Baker, a ghost town is "a town for which the reason for being no longer exists." The great expanse of Texas

abounds with such places, and Baker claims to have identified more than a thousand of these sites and to have visited approximately three hundred. He described eighty-six abandoned places in *Ghost Towns of Texas* (1986), and now, with the publication of *More Ghost Towns of Texas*, he's written about ninety-four more, always with an eye to explaining how each one's "reason for being" faded away.

The new volume is a direct outgrowth of the older one. Baker's criteria for including a town in the book—that it have visible, tangible remains for a visitor to see, that it be accessible by public roadway, and that its location help to maintain an even distribution of sites statewide—have not changed. Neither has his recipe for informing his readers about individual sites. The towns are organized alphabetically, with each entry including a map, a short description of the place's present circumstances, several paragraphs outlining the town's history (founding, heyday, eventual demise), at least one black-and-white photograph (often more) of the site made by the author, and detailed directions for finding the place. A number of entries include historical photographs as well, and, where appropriate, Baker's directions warn readers about such hazards as bad roads, poison ivy, or snakes.

*More Ghost Towns of Texas* is more field guide than history, more for those interested in exploring abandoned places firsthand than for readers who would like to fit those places, and their abandonment, into a larger understanding of the Texas past. Baker has no thesis to advance here, no new observations on how circumstances of time and place can combine to force communities out of existence.

Nonetheless, it's an affecting book, especially as its separate small histories accumulate. Reading through the various town entries—from Boquillas in the Big Bend to Electric City in the Panhandle, from Old D'Hanis in the rocky hills west of San Antonio to Washington-on-the-Brazos in leafy east Texas—one can't help but sense the power of people's dreams as they establish a new place, a bit of their anxiety when things start going bad, and some portion of their despair as their

community slowly ceases to exist. So, despite T. Lindsay Baker's "just the facts, ma'am" approach, *More Ghost Towns of Texas* is worth spending some time with, especially if you can do so in Bomarton, or Desdemona, or Runningwater, or Santo Tomás, or Sutherland Springs, or. . . .

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